

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 6, 2011

The Honorable Barack Obama  
President, United States of America  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

As Members of Congress dedicated to eradicating hunger, we write to request that you convene a White House Conference on Food and Nutrition at your earliest convenience. We believe presidential leadership is important in order to develop a plan to treat, combat and end hunger in America once and for all.

As you may know, President Richard Nixon held the first and only White House Summit in December 1969. This summit addressed a national nutrition policy and was, in our opinion, a successful summit that led to a variety of improvements in the anti-hunger safety net. Over the past forty-plus years, we have seen rampant hunger addressed in the United States through the establishment of and improvements in the Food Stamp, school meals and WIC programs. We have seen the establishment of the food bank and food pantry systems and we have seen retailers and farms make a concerted effort to provide access to nutritious food to people who have difficulty putting food on their tables. As a result of that first Summit and Congressional action, widespread starvation has been eliminated from the United States. No longer do we find in our great nation the swollen bellies and sunken eyes that so shocked America in the 1960s and 70s.

The sad reality, however, is that we have more than 50 million people in the United States who go without food at some point during the year and 17.2 million are children. This is simply unconscionable in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The annual food insecurity data released by USDA shows that, at best, we are running in place when it comes to hunger in the United States. In many cases, hunger is getting worse in America. While hunger rates have not skyrocketed at the same pace as the poverty rate, we know the problem will not get better by itself.

We firmly believe hunger can and should be eliminated but to do so will take Presidential leadership. Like we have done in previous Congresses, we will introduce legislation requiring a White House Conference on Food and Nutrition to be held by December 31, 2012. While we will continue to advocate for passage of this bill, we believe you have the authority to convene a White House Conference on Food and Nutrition without Congressional authorization.

A White House Conference on Food and Nutrition would bring together experts in food, health, nutrition, and economic security to develop a plan not only to end hunger once and for all in the United States, but also require that proper nutrition be taken into account in such a plan.

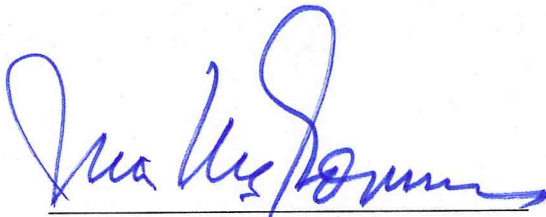
Ending hunger is the moral thing to do, but it is also critical that we address the issues associated with the rising cost of food and health care, increased obesity rates, and the health problems associated with obesity, poor nutrition, and hunger.

We know that hunger and obesity are opposite sides of the same issue. In many cases, a family can be both obese and hungry simply because poorer families are forced to purchase low-nutrient, high caloric foods in order to feed themselves and their families. We cannot focus on either hunger or nutrition and ignore the other issue. It is imperative that both hunger and nutrition be addressed simultaneously. A White House Conference on Food and Nutrition, as described above and in our legislation, can achieve both goals.

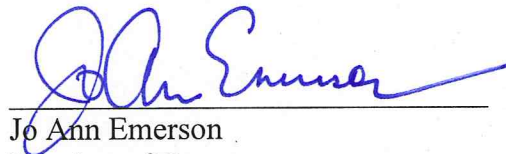
We were pleased and supportive of the announcement of your pledge to end childhood hunger by 2015. However, we are concerned that your goal will not be met. While we are pleased with the commitment the First Lady brings to the Let's Move campaign and her tireless work to improve the nutritional quality of food, we remain concerned that the campaign is not addressing hunger in the way a White House Conference can.

We hope you will agree to convene a White House Conference on Food and Nutrition as soon as possible. A copy of our legislation is included with this letter. We look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,



James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress



Jo Ann Emerson  
Member of Congress